

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 OMB-01 /091 W
-----051549 110248Z /61

R 100826Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1377
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, ETRD, PBOR, LA, TH
SUBJECT: LAO-THAI RELATIONS

REF: (A) BANGKOK 7109 (B) VIENTIANE 311 (C) VIENTIANE 314

1. DURING A MEETING MARCH 9, ACCORDING TO BANGKOK PRESS, FONMIN UPPADIT AND LAO SECSTATE NOUPHAN SIDPHASAY AGREED TO EXCHANGE TRADE MISSION SOON AND TO WORK TO MAKE THE MEKONG RIVER BORDER AN AREA OF "FRIENDSHIP AND PEACE". NOUPHAN APPARENTLY DELIVERED TO THE RTG AN AIDE-MAMOIRE REGARDING THE MEKONG RIVER INCIDENT, IN WHICH THAI PATROLS FIRED ACROSS THE BORDER (REF B). REFERRING TO THE INCIDENT, UPPADIT TOLD THE PRESS THAT BOTH SIDES AGREED TO AVOID CONFLICT ALONG THE BORDER. NOUPHAN CALLED FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 1976 THAI-LAO FRIENDSHIP AGREEMENT, WHICH NORMALIZED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES FOLLOWING THE PATHET LAO TAKEOVER IN VIENTIANE. WITHOUT SPECIFYING, NOUPHAN SAID
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"THERE HAVE BEEN SOME CONTRADICTIONS" IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT.

2. REACTING TO CHARGES BY LAO PM KAYSONE AND SECSTATE NOUPHAN THAT THE U.S. WAS REACTIVATING BASES IN THAILAND (REF A), FORMER PM KHUKRIT PRAMOT IN HIS NEWSPAPER COLUMN "RINGSIDE" MARCH 9 CHARGED THAT SECSTATE NOUPHAN "DISPLAYED

HOSTILITY TOWARDS THAILAND WITHOUT CONCERN FOR THAI GOOD INTENTIONS". KHUKRIT SAID THAT NOUPHAN HAS BEEN UNREASONABLE IN INSISTING, WRONGLY, THAT THERE ARE STILL US BASES IN THAILAND. AMERICAN BASES, KHUKRIT SAID, ARE NOT "SMALL THINGS, WHICH COULD BE HIDDEN FROM THE PUBLIC'S EYES". IF THERE WERE BASES IN THAILAND, THE THAI, NOT THE LAO PEOPLE, "WOULD HOLLER AGAINST THEM". THE LAOTIAN GOVERNMENT IS "TOO CREDULOUS", KHUKRIT WROTE, AND GUILTY OF UNFAIR ALLEGATIONS, DESPITE SEVERAL GESTURES OF GOOD WILL FROM THE THAI GOVERNMENT. KHUKRIT CONCLUDED, "AS IT IS, I CANNOT SEE HOW THAILAND AND LAOS COULD REACH MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, SINCE LAOS IS STILL HARBORING SUSPICION ALL THE TIME AND WILL NOT SHOW ANY UNDERSTANDING TOWARDS THAILAND".

3. COMMENT: DESPITE THE CHARGES FROM THE LAOTIANS, THE UPPADIT-NOUPHAN MEETING SEEMS TO HAVE RESULTED IN A MORE SENSIBLE EXCHANGE WHICH HOPEFULLY WILL CLEAR THE WAY FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT IN LAO-THAI RELATIONS.

4. FORMER PM KHUKRIT IS SOMETIMES SNIDE, BUT RARELY SO DIRECT AS IN HIS CRITICISM OF VISITOR NOUPHAN AND THE LAO GOVERNMENT. HIS REMARKS REFLECT GENERAL EXASPERATION AMONG THAIS IN DEALING WITH THE LPDR, WHICH IS SEEN HERE FREQUENTLY AS UNREASONABLE, UNRESPONSIVE AND ITS OWN WORST ENEMY. WHITEHOUSE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, NEGOTIATIONS, BORDER INCIDENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANGKO07359
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780109-0095
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780385/aaaactme.tel
Line Count: 86
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ed514cca-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BANGKOK 7109, 78 VIENTIANE 311, 78 VIENTIANE 314
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3379335
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LAO-THAI RELATIONS
TAGS: PEPR, ETRD, PBOR, LA, TH
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ed514cca-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014